



Being Okay is Not Okay

There are two types of people in this world: those who fake it, and those who live it.

There are those who separate their professional life from their personal life. They believe once the tie is undone, they are entitled to partake in morally questionable activities, because it's no reflection on them professionally. I've seen this mentality displayed numerous times throughout college, where education majors would party and make mockeries of themselves for all to see. It is the saddest, most disgraceful insult to not only the profession, but to me as well. That dichotomy does not exist for me. Who I am, what I uphold, and how I conduct myself does not change between my professional self and personal self: they are inseparable. You don't get a choice to be a role model and then not. When you become a teacher, you are morally binding yourself to higher standards and expectations that must always be upheld, regardless of the situation. I don't fake it: I live it.

I am a cynical philanthropist. I see the absolute worse in society. No one holds themselves accountable for their actions anymore; no one does the right thing anymore because it's the road less traveled: difficult and onerous. Simply put, no one tries anymore. It's easier to flock with the pack than to stand alone against the world that spits in your face and kicks you in the gut. This type of mentality leaves society just... okay. That's why it's

important for me to become a teacher, to show everyone that being okay is *not* okay. It's a festering problem that everyone is aware of, but sweep under the rug rather than confront it. That attitude is why we are here in the first place, and it *needs* changing.

I will be teaching individuals who are on the brink of greatness or collapse. We focus too highly on the success of society that the individual is left forgotten. Not only that, but the success of society and our country depends on the individuals that anchor our nation. That success is going to come from the proper cultivation of our future generations. It is my job to show students that greatness is obtainable, that even though success is hard and perilous, it is worth it. Teachers need to give their students the over-the-top push when they teeter between what's right and what's wrong, no matter how difficult it may be.

My concentration is English. Language, both written and spoken, is a powerful asset to the individual in both knowledge and expression. Powerful ideas are expressed through powerful words, and I want my students to find the power in them that they were unaware of. In my classroom, the student is first. I am merely guiding their learning to reach greater potentials and understandings. I will encourage critical thinking of texts, and demand quality writing. My expectations are going to be high of my students, regardless of their present levels. All I ask for is for students to be accountable for their work, to never make excuses, and always put great effort in their work.

I have never been a part of the limelight in high school or in college. While everyone would be partying and drinking, I would be studying harder and training my body harder.

Partying was and still is useless to me. I was raised to rise above what everyone else was doing, and I wasn't going to do something that "felt good" just because it was easier. If it's easy, it isn't worth doing. Studying to better your mind is worth doing. Pushing your body to the outermost limits is worth doing. Doing the right thing, whether society accepts it or not, is worth doing.

There's a triad that exists within us all: mind, body, and soul. The mind is knowledge. It's where we know what to do, where we question and where we think. Once the mind knows better, it does better, so constantly thriving for knowledge and learning is crucial. The body is physical fitness. It's essential to have a structured temple where you live and a healthy vehicle to guide knowledge. These two components demand discipline, but the last component, the soul, is almost always neglected. The soul is morality. It's what connects the mind and body together. It's the part of the whole system that knows the road is going to be hard, but guides you down it just the same. It's the faith to rise above the rest even when it means you stand alone. It's doing what's right not matter what.

Why is this important involving school? Any and all problems faced with schools and society all stem from a lack of moral fiber. It's that simple, but no one wants to admit it or face it. We are breeding individuals who go out into a world that shapes them and changes them, rather than the other way around. We get so caught up with standards and test scores that the individual becomes another statistic than a self-actualizing person. Why are tests implemented in the first place: because it's easier to categorize and box students into special

groups than it is to individualize each person. The focus is predominately on the mind and body in schools. But without the soul aspect to ground and guide the individual, how can we expect healthy, functional, rational, and respectable adults? One aspect cannot be neglected for the sake of another; we will ultimately fail with that approach.

I recognize this and plan on changing it through my classroom. All my students will be held accountable for their actions and work. This is imperative for success in any facet of life. When people are held accountable, they are forced to take ownership for what they do, whether it is good or bad. My expectations will always be laid out for my students, and it will be very clear to them that success is a conscious choice. Your mindset is what dictates whether you succeed or fail, and it's hard to help those who can't help themselves. But leading by example, and living everything that I stand for and putting it all on the line for myself and my students, that's the difference between faking it and living it, between success and failure.

My moral backbone and views on education come from my life experiences. My mother never let me get away with anything, and always held me accountable for what I said, and always admit when I was wrong. A simple concept: you can't be right if you're wrong, and that's how I live my life today. I grew up with a special needs sibling. I've seen the worst of the worst of people who traumatized her daily. I've gained a completely different perspective of life from having her in my life. I am more compassionate, more empathetic towards others because I felt what she felt all those times she was ridiculed for being

“different.” I became determined to be better than those hecklers and rise above those who bring others down. That determination flourished and grew into the other facets of my being.

Though I talk about rising above and doing what’s right, it takes a strong and committed community to do that. Design Thinking is a concept that appeals to me, as it focuses on the classroom as a whole to develop relationships early on, where feelings can be expressed and challenges are met together. Building the foundation of a strong unit is needed for the individual success of each student.

The idea of Mass Customized Learning is something that I am interested in, but would need to alter to fit my needs and the needs of my students. Having an educational curriculum that is catered to the individual need of the students is beyond powerful, but we cannot let technology overrun the social aspect of the classroom. There needs to be group involvement, not total isolation from each other.

My students will be taught with dignity, so it would only seem natural to discipline them with dignity. I don’t believe that sending a student out of class is any more beneficial to that student than it is to the rest of the class. Problems are going to arise, there’s no denying that, but there are so many better ways to approach the situation. Communication is important in this situation. There’s always a reason why a student acts out, and until we both understand that reason, nothing is resolved. If we are able to come to an agreement and work together to find a resolution, not only is the issue fixed but the relationship is stronger.

I don’t believe that placing myself in one educational school of thought or believing in only a couple theories has any benefit to me. Every school of thought has its own highlights

and valuable insight, so narrowing the spectrum to only a select few is very closed minded.

All areas are important, and must be utilized by teachers at different times. Some days will need to be teacher-directed, because of new content and direction. Other days it will be student-directed, where their exploration of content will derive new knowledge and thoughts. I am aware of the different thoughts, and plan on using each mindset accordingly and when necessary.

If I absolutely have to associate myself with any theories, I would put myself under Humanism, Reconstructivism, and Essentialism. I believe everyone is good, and that the individual should be focused on to create critical thinking and self-aware people. I relate Humanism and Reconstructivism to morals, as I feel to being good and understand and change the world, people must establish and uphold a moral fiber for themselves. But I also believe that students need to know the basics and core knowledge from the teacher, where Essentialism comes into play. Students need to be able to empathize and understand people are going to have different opinions and values, and must learn how to accept people for who and what they are. I am a firm believer that we need empathy in classrooms, and students who understand the feelings of others as well as their own feelings. Community is a must in order to have individual success. More importantly, students need to be aware of the problem society faces in order to help ameliorate them in the future.

There are some philosophers of education that I am lenient towards. The most relatable one is Socrates. His belief in the betterment of the moral self and asking students

questions that help prosper knowledge from within is what I stand for. The betterment of people morally is the only way for individuals and society to flourish. We need virtue. We can't disregard it and replace it with intelligence. It doesn't matter how smart someone is: if they don't know the difference between right and wrong their intelligence is absolutely useless.

I also agree with the ideals held by Confucius. He believed that morality and education were inseparable and even set up his own universal ethical system. I don't think morals and virtues should be regulated like test and standards, but students need to be aware of consequences. They need to understand doing what's right yields better results than what feels good. They need to think long term, not short term instant gratification.

Teaching and learning are one in the same. I love to teach because I love to learn. This process is a relationship between the student and teacher, and just like any other relationship, there needs to be communication between both parties. If the relationship is not well structured and not welcome by either party, it will ultimately fall apart and learning will never be reached. But with well-developed communication, as well as structure and balance, learning will flourish.

In my classroom, the physical set up would be in a circle, where everyone could see each other. I really stress the idea of community, so having separate groups would not be applicable (until we start working in small groups on separate projects, then the desks may be set up accordingly.) The main focus of my class during the first few weeks of school would be to learn about each individual and to create a sense of comfort.

Learning is meant to be fun and engaging, so my lessons would be more project-based than test-based. Anyone can sit down with a sheet of paper in front of them, but it takes a lot of thought and commitment to produce a creative and personal piece of work that reflects the learning of the individual. Obviously this wouldn't be appropriate all the time, and I am aware of that. That does not mean essays can't be fun, or research papers can't be engaging. It's my job to make it meaningful for the students, and in turn they will make it meaningful for themselves.

Intrinsic motivation is what I strive for in my classroom. I do believe that hard work and determination should be rewarded as an afterthought, but students should see the worth before rewards are given. They need to understand that what they do and the amount of work they put in will pay off for them. Portfolios will be kept of all student work, so they can see where they started and how far they have come. It's not about the outcome or the end, but the journey we take that defines hard work and true dedication. When students are aware of that, they will always succeed.

English seems to have a bad rep in school. Students seem to fear reading and shy away from writing. Anything is possible with a little hard work, and students need to be willing to give me that, and I will return that hard work by being there when they need me. Reading is a great thing. It's enjoyable, it's liberating, it's empowering. That often gets overlooked when students are forced to interpret passages and figure out the symbolism of the drapes. That has its place, but I want students engaged in conversation about the text and what it means, and

bounce ideas off each other and gain more insight than they thought possible. Writing is equally as valuable. The power of language is incredible, and if students embrace that power, there is nothing in this world that can stop them.

I am going to have high expectations of my students. It'd be foolish not to. It doesn't matter the grade, the level of ability, the socioeconomic status, any of it: everyone has the right to improve upon the present skills they have. The attitude "I can't" will not exist. It will be replaced with "I presently struggle with," because giving up is unacceptable, and I do not tolerate unacceptable behavior. I care about the success of my students. That is why I am going to push them to their limits. I am very strict, but fair. I will work with my students and give them everything I have. I'm not harsh. I love unconditionally. My personal feelings do not get mixed up with individual students. It's not about personal vendettas or rumors, it's about doing what's right for the individual in need.

I lead by example. I believe talk is cheap, and actions speak louder than words. It's hard to take people seriously when they say one thing but completely forego that notion based on their actions. You can't live life that way. You're either all in, or not in at all. It is not easy, not by any means. But I do it because I have to. I make that conscious choice every day to do better than the rest, and that includes those who are in the same profession. This does not mean I am perfect, nor does it mean I will not listen to anyone. Compromising is also vital for success. You need to understand where people come from and take into account their

opinions and feelings. That does not mean I ever compromise who I am and what I stand for, but that I understand all parties and all views before making decisions.

I have a lot to offer to any school and any community. I am honest, respectful, goal-oriented, dedicated, but more importantly, I'm real. I call a spade a spade. I know there is no easy fix to the major problems revolving around education, but I am not afraid to stand up for what's right, no matter what. I am going to impact any community I work in, and my presence is unique and powerful. I am going to do great things. There is no doubt about it.